collaboration with 41% foreign equity to the Ministry of Industry on 14.6.1995 for providing Basic Telephone Services.

This was approved by the Ministry of Industry vide their letter dated 11.11.1995.

(c) M/s. HFCL have informed that they have not sold any equity to either Bezeq, the Israel Telecommunications Corporation Limited or Shinawatra International Public Company Ltd.

Formulation of guidelines for maintaining ecological balance to prevent environmental degradation

657. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether any guidelines have been formulated to maintain ecological balance and to prevent environmental degradation in the areas where open cast coal mining is being undertaken in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof with implementation;

(c) if not, whether Government's attention has been drawn to a news-item which appeared in the Economic Times of 25th December, 1995 under the caption NRSA data slams coalfields for eroding land along Damodar, Bokaro Rivers; and

(d) whether any survey or assessment has been done regarding soil/land environment degradation in the open cast coal mining areas, and if so, the findings thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT & FORESTS (SHRI RAJESH PILOT): (a) and (b) Guidelines for integrating environmental concerns for exploitation of mineral resources have been issued. Further, a statutory notification was issued on 27th January, 1994 as amended on 4th May, 1994 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 which provides for environmental impact assessment of all new mining projects of major minerals including open cast coal mining projects with lease area above 5 ha. Such proposals are considered by the Expert Committee and approvals are accorded, wherever found suitable, by the Ministry with specific stipulations to be implemented by the project proponents.

(c) and (d) Government is aware of the news-item which appeared in the Economic times of 25th December, 1995. For preventing environmental pollution, apart from periodic monitoring of implementation of the stipulated conditions in the projects accorded environmental clearance, Ministry has taken up a study of carrying capacity of Damodar River Basin to provide the data on environmental status and other associated inputs to draw up suitable strategies and action plan for sustainable development of the region.

Support of Pakistan for Land Route via Pakistan to Gulf Countries

658. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government envisage seeking the support of Pakistan for providing land route *via* Pakistan to Gulf countries and other European countries;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any survey as to the escalation in Indian exports to these countries have been made if the land route *via* Pakistan is made feasible; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI M. RAJASEKARA MURTHY): (a) to (d) An International priority route is being developed in accordance with the decision of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), covering the countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines. The said route would facilitate Indian exports to these countries.